



State of Arizona
Department of Education

EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNT HANDBOOK

A Parent's Guide

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THE EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNT HANDBOOK

A Parent's Guide To Expanded School Choice

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Chapter I: Introduction

What is an ESA?

The importance of providing a world class education to all Arizona children cannot be overstated or hold more emphasis in our state today. Historically, Arizona has pioneered breakthrough programs that have grounded themselves in supporting district and charter school initiatives, expanding educational choices, increasing transparency and delivering a high quality education. Under the direction of the Arizona State Legislature and Superintendent John Huppenthal, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE or Department) has created the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) Program to continue along the path of innovative education reform.

Administered by ADE and funded fully by state education tax dollars, an ESA is a parent controlled bank account established to provide an education for qualified disabled and non-disabled students, whose subject matter *must* include reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies and science. The ESA program allows parents of eligible students to utilize public monies and purchase numerous educational services rendered solely through and by private individuals, vendors and schools.



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Separate from the public school system, an ESA delivers educational funding in a unique, alternative way. By accepting an ESA, the parent or qualified student agrees to abide by an annually signed contract that releases the public school system from educating the student or providing services. School districts are released from their obligation and, unless stipulated in statute, may decline enrollment and assistance as long as the qualified student is under and ESA contract.

By separating from the public school system, parents can seek a wider range of alternative educational services that would not have otherwise been available. From private schools to learning at home from parents or tutors, the ESA program delivers the most flexible educational experience in the United States. Funded by the state, tailored by the parent, individualized for the student—the ESA program delivers a unique and rich experience to better prepare Arizona children to succeed.

How is an ESA Different From Public School?

With An ESA you...	With An ESA you...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Receive a debit card with 90% of the same funds districts use to educate your child in public school.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cannot attend classes or receive <u>any</u> services from the public school system.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have <u>complete control</u> over your own child's education and utilize resources not available through the public school system.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do not receive a high school diploma.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Must take full legal responsibility for your child's education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do not have the right to a continual education beyond the age of 18.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are required to submit quarterly reports and adhere to an annual contract with ADE.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cannot receive a School Tuition Organization (STO) scholarship.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> May be required to obtain documents (METs) and receive testing from your local public school.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cannot spend funds on anything, but a prescribed list of options.



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To be clear, an ESA is an expansion on schools choice as well as a completely alternative pathway of publically funded education. With exception of funding, few parallels can be drawn between a classic public education and an ESA. By accepting an ESA scholarship, a parent of a qualified student is removing full responsibility from the public school system to educate their child and agreeing to abide by a one year contract entered into with ADE.